

A DISCOURSE ON WITCHCRAFT.

Occasioned by a BILL now depending in PARLIAMENT, to repeal the Statute made in the first Year of the Reign of King JAMES I, Intituled, *An Act against CONJURATION, WITCHCRAFT, and dealing with evil and wicked SPIRITS.*

CONTAINING,
Seven CHAPTERS on the following HEADS.

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| <p>I. To prove that the Bible has been falsely translated in those Places which speak of <i>Witchcraft</i>.</p> <p>II. That the Opinion of <i>Witches</i>, has had its Foundation in Heathen Fables.</p> <p>III. That it hath been improved by the Papal Inquisitors, seeking their own private Gain, as also to establish the Usurped Dominion of their Founder.</p> | <p>IV. That there is no such Thing as a <i>Witch</i> in the Scriptures, and that there is no such Thing as a <i>Witch</i> at all.</p> <p>V. An Answer to their Arguments who endeavour to prove there are <i>Witches</i>.</p> <p>VI. How the Opinion of <i>Witches</i> came at first into the World.</p> <p>VII. The Conclusion.</p> |
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Nam ut verè loquamur superstitio iusta per orbem oppressit omnium fere animos, atque hominum occupavit imbecillitatem.
Cic. Lib. 2. de Divinat.

L O N D O N :

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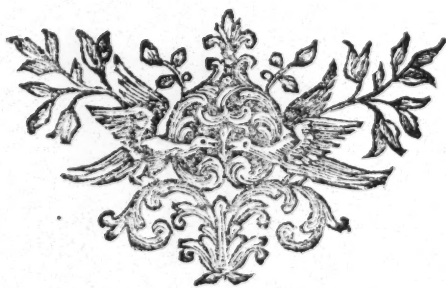


It is with great Satisfaction, that every Man of good Understanding, must hear of the Bill now depending in Parliament to repeal an Act made in the Reign of King *James I*, concerning WITCHCRAFT, which, as it before stood, was a Blot in the Statute Book, and ought to be expunged. Had this been done sooner, it had prevented many poor Wretches from suffering great Torments and Miseries, at the Hands of the superstitious and ignorant Vulgar; for tho' no one has of late Years been executed on this Account, yet it is in the Memory of Thousands, that the WITCH of *Hertford*, *Jane Wenham*, was condemned in the Reign of Queen *Anne*, and would have been executed, if the Judge, who tried her, had had no more Sense than the Jury, who obstinately persisted in their Verdict, tho' twice sent out to consider better of it, by that wise and upright Dispenser of Justice, Sir *John Powel*; the Evidence against this miserable old Woman was likewise positive, and two Reverend Gentlemen swore they had actually seen her fly. What is there, that some Sort of Men will not believe!

iv *To the* R E A D E R.

But if Men can be thus infatuated, it is dangerous for them to have the Sanction of a Law on their Side.

THE zealous Assertors of *Witchcraft* think it no Slander, to charge all those who deny it with Atheism: As if the denying of God did necessarily follow the denying of *Witches*: An Error so gross, that it does not deserve a Confutation. This I am sure of, that the Affirmers of *Witchcraft*, may more justly be accounted *Heathens* than the Deniers of it *Atheists*, as their Opinion infers a Plurality of Gods, by attributing omnipotent Effects to more than one. * And these Effects of *Witchcraft* are so ridiculouly absurd, and some of them so impossible for the Devil himself to compass, that it is apparent, they are partly founded in mistaken Interpretation of Scripture, partly in the knavish and gainful Impostures of some Men, and partly in the foolish Credulity, and frightful or melancholy Fancies of others: All which it is hoped will be made appear in the following Discourse.



A DIS-



A
DISCOURSE
ON
WITCHCRAFT.

CHAP. I.

*That the Bible has been falsely translated in
those Places which speak of Witchcraft.*



HAT absolute and unlimited Power with which the Eastern Nations were always governed, required not only the Force of Arms, but the Craft also and Tricks of Superstition to uphold it : Nor indeed were standing Armies of greater Use to the oriental Monarchs, for keeping their People in Awe, than Idols were and Priests,
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and the various Impositions used by them ; so various that to enumerate every particular Way of Delusion practiced by the Heathen Priests of Old, would be a very difficult Task to perform. Wherefore as it belongs to my present Purpose and Design, to treat of them only so far as they comprehend all that Notion of a *Witch*, which may be found in Scripture : I shall, in order thereto reduce them to these four general Heads of *Juggling*, *Inchanting*, *Conjuring*, and *Divining*.

JUGGLERS were such as performed strange Things in the Sight of the Common People, to their Admiration and Astonishment. This they did either by *Legerdemain*, that is, Slight of Hand ; or else by *Magic*, that is, Skill in *Natural Philosophy* ; or lastly, by a *Familiar*, that is, a confederated Person privy to the Plot, and Assistant to the Performance.

INCHANTERS were such as with Charms or certain Compositions, and set Forms of Words, pretended by Virtue thereof to bless and to curse, to do good and to do hurt to the Persons for whom those Charms were made. Now these two Sorts of Impostors may not improperly be called, the counterfeit *Miracle Mongers* of the Heathens, as the other two that follow may justly be called their false Prophets.

CONJURERS, or CONJECTURERS (which is their right Name) so called from their guessing at the future Event of Things, made Use of Rules drawn from their own or other Mens Observations, about the Stars, about the Fowls of the Air, about the Entrails of sacrificed Beasts, and about many other Things needless here to be reckoned up.

DIVINERS,

DIVINERS, whom I here call so by Way of Eminence and of Distinction, from *Conjecturers*, (not ignorant that *divining*, taken in a general Sense, comprehends *conjecturing* also;) *Diviners*, I say, pretended to a higher and more infallible Kind of Prophecy, receiving forsooth, their Revelations from some Divinity or other; either from a God, or from a Dæmon, or from the Spirit of a Man departed.

THUS did the Heathen Priests with subtle and sly Inventions, magnify the Power of their Idol Gods, and seduce the foolish People to Idolatry. Wherefore these Impostures were so hateful in the Sight of God, that the *Israelites* are often, in the *Mosaical* Law, forewarned from them, as being those very Abominations, for which the Lord did cast their Enemies out of the Land which they were to inherit: But above all Places the 18th Chapter of *Deuteronomy* is most remarkable, I mean the 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th Verses of that Chapter, which, in our *English* Translation runs thus:

When thou art come into the Land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the Abomination of those Nations.

There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his Son or his Daughter to pass through the Fire, or that useth Divinations, or an Observer of Times, or an Inchanter, or a Witch.

Or a Charmer, or a Consulter with familiar Spirits, or a Wizard, or a Necromancer.

For all that do these Things are an Abomination unto the Lord; and because of these Abominations, the Lord thy God shall drive them out from before thee.

Now this Place in *Deuteronomy* is therefore carefully to be considered as to my present Purpose, since there is not a Word in the *Bible* importing *Witchcraft*, in any other Sense than the Words of the 10th and 11th Verses do: Wherefore if we consider Things right, *Witchcraft* is not to be found in Scripture, this being the true Translation of those two Verses.

Let there not be found among you any one that maketh his Son or his Daughter pass through the Fire, or that useth Divinations, or a Stargazer, or a Conjecturer, or a Miracle Monger.

Or an Inchanter, or a Seeker of an Oracle, or a Wizard, or a Necromancer.

HERE are to be seen three notorious Mistakes of our *English* Translators. The first is their calling a *Conjecturer* an *Inchanter*, for what Reason I cannot imagine, there being not the least Hint of such a Signification in the *Hebrew* Word *מַדְבֵּר*, far better was it rendered in the old Translation, a *Regarder of the flying of Fowls*, for that is Truth; the Flight of Fowls being but one Way of many, which *Conjecturers* made Use of, whereas on the contrary to call a *Conjecturer* an *Inchanter* has no Manner of Agreement with, but is quite opposite to the Meaning of the Original: An *Inchanter* being the same with a *Charmer*, which follows in the next Verse, and is in the *Hebrew* *הַכֹּדֵר*, a Word derived from *הָכַר* to speak, pronounce or declare, and not from the same Word as it signifies to join to, or be in League with, from whence some have imagined, that an *Inchanter* is one who has a League with the Devil.

The second Mistake of our Translators is, their calling a *Miracle-Monger* a *Witch*. The *Hebrew* Word is *מַכְשֵׁף* which the Septuagint renders

ders by the *Greek Word* φάσμα, meaning an Impostor, not a Poisoner; for it is ridiculous to think, that *Pharaoh's Magicians, Jezabel the Queen, and King Manasses*, did exercise the Art of Poisoning. Thus in the 18th Chapter of the *Revelations* 23d Verse: The Word φαρμακεία is neither taken for *Witchcraft*, nor Poisons, but for Impostures; tho' our Translators have render'd it *Witchcraft*. Now these *Miracle-Mongers*, or Juggling Workers of counterfeit Miracles, are therefore so severely prohibited in that Law of *Moses*, because they acted strange Things in the Sight of the People, to confirm them in false Religions. Hence it is, that in the Old Testament, where mention is made of Idolatry, you shall frequently meet with *Miracle-Mongers*, and *Soothsayers* coupled together; for the Priests of an Idol would commonly advance its Reputation, by counterfeiting the Gifts of *Prophecy*, and working *Miracles* pretended to be received from that God, to whose Honour the Idol was erected. Let not any one think, that for the Performance of these counterfeit Miracles, they stood in Need of the Devil's Assistance; no, what they did either exceeded not the Compass of human Art, altho' miraculous in the Eyes of the Vulgar, or else they did not really perform what they seemed to do, by a meer juggling Imposture. Such Kind of Jugglers were those that stood before *Pharaoh* in Opposition to *Moses* and *Aaron*. For whosoever believes that *Pharaoh's Magicians* could by the Help of Devils turn in an Instant a Stick into a Serpent, ascribes unto the Devil an omnipotent creating Power, equal to his who did but say, let such a Thing be, and it was so. *St. Augustine*, I confess seems to endeavour the evading this Objection by laying down for a Maxim,
That

That in the Elements the Seeds of all Bodies lie secretly hid, which, when they meet with convenient Opportunities, put themselves forth, and rise to the just Bounds and Figures, due to their respective Species. From whence he infers, that the Devil in turning the *Magicians* Rods into Serpents, did not create those Serpents, because he produced them out of their Seeds: But by St. *Austine's*, good Leave, tho' I should grant him that the Seed of a Serpent is in a Stick, yet I would never grant, that the *Magicians* could so suddenly bring forth this Seed into Action for the Production of a Serpent. It is true, that Men by their well ordering the Seeds of Plants, may accelerate the Generation of such Plants, and the ripening of their Fruits. They may also by putting Eggs into Camels Dung, procure the Generation of Chickens. Wherefore it is probable, that Devils being more skilful than Men, may strangely promote the Generation of several Creatures, beyond any human Art: But yet neither Men nor Devils, in regard they act these Things by the Application of Matter to Matter, can produce any Creature out of its Seed, without a considerable Space of Time. No, they must attend the Laws of Matter, and wait upon Dame Nature's Leisure, there being many successive Alterations required in Seed, before it can come to be the Embryo of a Creature, and many also must afterwards follow, before that Embryo can arrive at a perfect Shape. Now many perceiving how Difficult it is to affirm, that the *Magicians* Staffs were turned into Serpents; they affirm, that it was not really done, but seemingly so, by a delusive juggling Trick of the Devil, who might convey the Staffs away, and slip Serpents in their Place. To these I answer,

swer, that if once they recede from the Letter of the Text, and say it was a Juggle of the Devil, I may as well say, it was a Juggle merely of the Magicians themselves, who did it by their fly and secret Tricks, as the *Hebrew* Word בלטיות signifies, which our Translators have rendered, by *their* *Inchantments*. Nor let any one wonder, that the Scripture should say, the Magicians Staffs were turned into Serpents, in regard the Scripture speaks only according to the deceived Apprehension of the Standers by. Just so, in the Case of *Samuel* raised by the *Witch* of Endor, it speaks according to the deceived Apprehensions of *Saul* and his Followers; for neither that Woman, nor all the Devils in Hell could raise *Samuel*, who had been dead and buried almost two Years. As for those who fancy, that God did then raise *Samuel*; it is a very likely Thing indeed, that God should refuse to answer *Saul*, when he consulted him in Ways appointed by himself, and yet should Answer him when he consulted in a forbidden Way. Besides, if *Samuel* had been raised by God, no doubt he would never have said unto *Saul*. *Why hast thou disquieted me?* For it would have been no disquiet nor trouble to him, to come upon God's Errand. Some there are, who will needs have it to be the Devil in the likeness of *Samuel*, because *Saul's* Death was foretold. To this I answer, that it was the Woman herself, or a Person confederated with her, who spoke it at a Venture, knowing that *Saul* was going to fight: But as for the Certainty of his Death, it could not have been foretold by the Devil himself.

THE third Error of our Translators is, their mistaking a Consulter with Oracles or false Prophets, for a Consulter of familiar Spirits: The

Hebrew

Hebrew Words are אוֹרָכָה שֶׁנֶּאֱמָר, which Word Ob-
signifies in Scripture, sometimes the Gift of Ora-
cling, and sometimes the Person who has such
Gift. It signifies also a Bottle or hollow Vessel,
and from this Signification, I suppose the other
came; for it is certain that Oracles, when they
pronounced their Oracles, did use to counterfeit
strange Kinds of Voices, that they might seem
not to be human. To this Purpose it is not un-
likely, that they made use of a Bottle, or Trunk,
or some other hollow Vessel, which they spoke
through, whereby their Voices must needs be
very much altered, especially if they were in a
Cave or Room under Ground, when they made
Answers to Enquiries. These Sorts of cheating
Tricks are plainly alluded to by the Prophet
Isaiah, in these Words; And thy Voice shall be as of
an Oracler out of the Earth, and thy Speech shall
peep out of the Dust. Here I suppose, the Pro-
phet chiefly alludes to the Necromantic Oracler,
or one who pretended to consult with the Dead:
Who himself or his Confederate, did therefore
counterfeit a Voice like the pieping of a Chicken,
that it might the more plausibly seem to be the
small Vo.ce of a poor departed Ghost. This
will appear more plainly, if we consider the 19th
Verse of the eighth Chapter of Isaiah, according
to the Translation of Junius and Termelius, our
own being hardly Sense: The Words are these,
For when they say unto you, ask Counsel of Ora-
clers and Soothsayers, who peep and mutter;
should not a People ask Counsel of their God?
should they ask Counsel of the Dead for the Liv-
ing? Now as the Oracles, when they pretended
to receive Answers from the Dead, would piep
like Chickens, so when they delivered the Mind
of a God, or a Dæmon, they counterfeited other
 Tones.

Tones. In which Way of Counterfeiting some were such excellent Artists, that they stood in Need of no Instrument to help them; but could speak with their Mouths shut, and their Voice would seem to come out of their Bellies, as if they had been really possess'd with a talking Devil: There was a Fellow not long since in *London*, a Blacksmith, who had this Art to great Perfection, and could not only make the Voice seem to come out of his Belly, but from Places at a Distance from where he stood. These Impostors by the *Greeks* were called *Engastrimuthians*, and also *Eurycleans*, from one *Eurycles*, a famous Impostor of this Kind. And, as *Plutarch* testifies, these *Engastrimuthians*, or *Eurycleans*, were antiently called *Pythons*: Now Πυθῶν and Πυθία Πυθῶν in *Greek* renders exactly the *Hebrew* Ob. Thus if we take Ob for an *Oracler*, and the Spirit of *Oracling*, we may very commodiously with *Junius* and *Tremelius*, translate that Passage in the *Chronicles* concerning *Manasses*, where it is said of him, אֹב עָשָׂה, he made or set up an Oracle, that is, he ordained or appointed Oracles. For the Word *Gnashab*, signifies to make or finish. Wherefore because it would be ridiculous to say, that *Manasses* made familiar Spirits; our Translators have altered the true Signification of *Gnashab*, and translate it, tho' erroneously, as if it signified to deal with, affirming that *Manasses* dealt with familiar Spirits. But whosoever seriously views and considers that Place, he will find it a mere Description of Idolatry, where there is Mention of high Places and Groves, and of Altars dedicated not only to *Baal*, but to the whole Host of Heaven, as also of the setting up a carved Image in the very House of God. Wherefore it was suitable to mention also that Crew of Men,

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who

who were set apart by *Manasses*, to officiate in this idolatrous Worship, such as were various Sorts of *Oracles*, and *Miracle-Mongers* : But how *WITCHES* should come in here I cannot tell, nor how *Devils*, unless it is thought *Devils* made Answers at the *Heathen Oracles* ; but from that I must beg Leave to dissent, and believe it has been sufficiently proved, that they were nothing but the *Impostures* of Men, on this Subject see a very learned and ingenious Paper now published called the *Weekly Oracle*, N^o 1. *Demosthenes*, did wisely observe in his Days, that the *Delphian Oracle* did φιλιππίζειν, so I am confident if History be true, that the *Hammonean* did Ἀλεξανδρίζειν, and all the rest of the cheating Pack did, one Way or other, Ἀνθρωπιζιέειν.

C H A P. II.

*That the Opinion of WITCHES has had its
Foundation in Heathen Fables.*

THUS have I made it appear how false Prophets and Workers of counterfeit Miracles have been mistaken by our Translators of the *Bible* for *WITCHES* and Dealers with familiar Spirits ; a Mistake so gross, that it obscures many Things in the Law of *Moses*, as also in the Prophets, where there are several Places directly intended against the Heathen Religion, especially that of the *Egyptians*. Now such was the vain Credulity of Men, that they did not only believe these Things were real which the Priests did counterfeit, but they also ascribed to
private

private Persons a Power equal to that of the Priests, or rather beyond it: For not only Men, but Women, especially old Women have been famous for prophesying of Things to come, whence they were called *Sagæ*, as also for wonderful and miraculous Exploits, whence they were called *Lamie* or *Veneficæ*. They were called *Lamie* chiefly from their Exploits upon little Children. For, it seems, according to the Fable, there was one *Lamia*, a beautiful Woman in *Lybia*, whom *Jupiter* fell in love with, but jealous *Juno* took her Children which she had by *Jupiter* and killed them, wherefore she, out of mere Spite, being grieved at the killing of her own Children, used to kill the Children of other Women. They were called *Veneficæ*, because they were wont to make Use of Herbs, which they supposed had strange Kind of Virtues in them; for with Herbs or Charms they always acted.

Num te carminibus, num te pallentibus herbis,
Devovit tacito tempore noctius anus?

Strange it is to consider how far the Folly of Men has proceeded in their Belief concerning the Actions both of Male and Female *Witches*: As if they had Power to transform Men and Women into Beasts; as if they could destroy the Fruits of the Earth, and the Fruit of the Womb, at their Pleasure; as if they could raise Winds and Tempests, or allay them, enable or disable in Matters venereal; in a Word, as if they could enslave Nature herself, and make the Universe obey the Commands. Examples of this prodigious Power are scattered up and down the *Roman* Poets, I shall quote some few of them out

of *Virgil, Horace, Ovid, Tibullus, Propertius, Lucan.*

Has Herbas, atq; hæc ponto mihi lecta venena,
Ipse dedit maris, nascuntur plurima ponto.
His ego sæpe lupum fieri, & se condere sylvis
Marim, sæpe animas imis excire sepulchris,
Atq; fatas aliò vidi traducere menses.

Virg. Eclo. 6,

Quos hominum ex facie, Dea sæva potentibus herbis
Induerat Circe, in vultus ac terga ferarum.

Virg. lib. 6. Æneid.

Nescio quis teneros oculus mihi fascinat.

Quæ movere cereas imagines,
Ut ipse nosti curiosus ; & polo
Deripere lunam vocibus possum meis,
Possum crematos excitare mortuos,
Desideriq; temperare poculum.

Horat. ode ult.

Illa reluctantem cursu deducere lunam
Nititur, & tenebris abdere solis equos.
Illa refrænât aquas, obliquaq; fulmina sistit;
Illa loco sylvas vivaq; saxa movet :
Per tumulos errat, sparsis distincta capillis,
Certaq; de tepidis colligit ossa rogis.
Devovet absentes simul achraq; cerea figit;
Et miserum tennes in jecur urget acus.

Ovid Epif. Hypsip.

————— Concussaq; sisto,
Stantia concutio cantu freta, nubila pello,
Nubilaq; induco, ventos abigoq; vocoq;
Ovid lib. 7. Metamor.

Num mea Theſſalico languent devota veveno
 Corpora num miſero carmen & herba nocent.
 Sagave punice à defixit nomina cerâ
 Et medium tenues in jecur urget acus
 Carmine læſa ceres ſterilem vanefcit in herbam
 Deficiunt læſi Carmine fontis aquæ ;
 Illicibus glandes cantataq; vitibus uva,
 Decidit & nullo poma movente fluunt,
 Quid vetat & nervas magicas torpere per artes,
 Forſitan impatiens fit latus inde meum.

Ovid 3. Amor. Eleg. 6.

Cum libet hæc trifti depellit nubila cœlo,
 Cum libet æſtivo provocat orbe nives.

Tibul. lib. 1. Eleg. 8.

Quid credam? Hæc eadem noſtros ſe dixit amores,
 Cantibus aut herbis ſolvere poſſe meos.

Tibul. lib. 1. Eleg. 8.

Invidiæ fuimus? num nos Deus obruit? an quæ
 Læcta Promethæis dividit herba jugis?

Propert. lib. 1. Eleg. 12.

Ceſſavere vices rerum, dilataq; longa
 Hæſit nocte dies, legi non paruit Æther ;
 Torpuit & præceps, audito carmine mundus,
 Axibus & rapidis impulſos Jupiter urgens
 Miratur non ire polos; Tunc omnia complent
 Imbribus & calido producunt nubila Phœbo
 Et tonat ignaro Cœlum Jove. *Lucan. lib. 6.*

THESE and many more Inſtances of the like
 Kind might be produced out of the Heathen
 Poets, ſufficient to teſtify the Folly of the vulgar
 Heathens, in their Belief concerning the Power
 of

of WITCHES. As for the Opinions concerning *Incubi* and *Succubi* Devils, I suppose it had its Rise from the Fable of the antient Heroes, who, as *Socrates* in *Plato's Cratylus* affirms, were begotten from the Conjunction of Deities with human Creatures ; which Kind of Conjunction who-soever believes, his Opinion is base and sottish, and fit only to be a Cloak for the Adulteries of the Heathen Priests, who often lay with other Mens Wives, pretending that the Gods had vouchsafed them the Honour of their Company. Very remarkable to this Purpose, is the Story of *Tyrannus*, a Priest of *Saturn*, who, under this Pretence, made Use of many a Man's Wife, 'till at last, one more wise than the rest, discovered the Cheat. In like Manner *Mundus*, a Gentleman of *Rome*, by the Help of the Priests belonging to the Temple of *Isis*, enjoyed his Pleasure on *Paulina*, a *Roman* Lady, who mistook him for the God *Anubis*.

NEVERTHELESS, let no one think that the ingenious Poets did themselves, or any other of the wiser Sort of Heathens, believe such ridiculous and absurd Fopperies ; for, on the contrary, when they speak their own Minds, and not according to the Fable, or vulgar Opinion, they laugh these Absurdities to Scorn : Thus *Propertius* derides them.

At vos deductæ quibus est fallacia lunæ,
 Et labor in magicis sacra piare focis ;
 Enagedum dominæ mentem convertite nostræ
 Et facite illa meo palleat ore magis :
 Tunc ego crediderim vobis, & fydera & amnes
 Posse Cytæmis ducere carminibus.

Propert. lib. 1. Eleg.

Ovid

Ovid also is of the same Mind, and gives no Credit to these Cheats.

Nec vos graminibus nec misto credite succo,
 Nec tentate nocens virus amantis equæ;
 Nec media marfis finduntur cantibus angues,
 Nec redit in fontes unda supina suos;
 Et quamvis aliquis Temesæa removerit æra,
 Nunquam Luna suis excutietur equis.

Ovid de Mediam sacrei.

Fallitur æmonias si quis decurrit ad artes,
 Datq; quod a teneri fronte revellit equi,
 Non facient ut vivat amor Medeides herbæ,
 Mixtaq; cum magicis merfa venena sonis.

Ovid lib. 2. de Arte Amand.

Quid te Phasiacæ juverunt gramina terræ
 Cum cupere patriâ Colchi manere Domo?
 Quid tibi profuerint Circe Perseides herbæ
 Cum tibi Neritias abstulit aura rates.

Ovid lib. 1. de Remed. amor.

Ergo quisquis opem nostra tibi poscis ab arte,
 Deme veneficiis carminibus fidem. *Ibid.*

But *Horace* excellently, and like himself, lays it down as a Mark or Sign of one's Proficiency in moral Philosophy, if he had learned to despise and laugh at these Kind of Fables:

Somnia, terrores magicos, miracula, fagas,
 Nocturnos Lemures, portentaq; Theffala rides?

Hor. Epist. ult.

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IN like Manner *Seneca* reproving the credulous Simplicity of elder Times, shews what Opinion he himself was of : And I might instance in other of the Antients, as in *Hippocrates* and *Lucian*, the one deriding the other, seriously disputing against magic Cheats : But I shall conclude with the Judgment of *Nero* the Emperor, who had Wit enough, who had Men, Books, Money, I had almost said the World at his Command, so that he could want no Helps to promote his Desires. This *Nero*, ambitious of being Chief in every Thing, especially desiring to command the Gods as well as Men, did, in order thereto, eagerly apply himself to the Study of *Magic*, which, after his utmost Endeavours, he forsook and despised, finding it to be vain, and to promise that which it cannot perform.

C H A P. III.

That it hath been improved by the Papal Inquisitors, seeking their own private Gain, as also to establish the usurped Dominion of their Founder.

NOW any one would think that these Kind of Heathenish Fables and Follies, although they took Root in the Minds of the Christian Vulgar, should never have been assented to by those who account themselves Rabbi's and Doctors of the People ; yet, I am assured, that there is hardly any Thing which I have quoted out of the Poets that has not been declared

clared true by the Inquisition, and by Canon Law: As any one may see, who will take the Pains to consult several Popish Writings; such as the Bull of Pope *Innocent* the Eighth, directed to the Inquisitors of *Almaine*, the *Malleus Maleficarum* of *Jacobus Sprengerus*, the *Formicarium* of *Johannes Niderius*, as also *Bartholomæus Spineus de Strigibus*, *Paulus Grillandus de Sortilegiis*, and, to mention no more, *Martin Delrio* the Jesuit's *Disquisitiones Magicæ*, who has written largely on this Subject.

NOR have they been content to assert the Fables of the Heathens only, without the Addition of many more of their own; for they confidently assert, that WITCHES make a Contract with the Devil, wherein they renounce their Baptism, and the Christian Faith; as also that they engage to slight and despise the Virgin *Mary*, to trample upon the Sign of the Cross, Images, and Reliques of Saints, Holy Water, Salt, Wax-Candles, and other Things, which these Men esteemed hallowed in their Church; to undervalue what they call the seven Sacraments, and particularly not to adore the consecrated Host. They also engage to be ready, as they tell us, at all Times to make their Appearance at the solemn Conventicles of *Witches*, where they Dance and Feast, and adore the Devil, who is present among them. Which mad Kind of Revelling, no doubt, as *Cardan* has well observed, is grounded on the antient Heathen *Orgia*. To these Conventicles the *Witches* are said to come from far distant Countries, being carried thro' the Air, for which strange Passage, they prepare their Bodies with I know not what Kind of Ointment; but I suppose it to be made of the same Ingredients, as that was, which turned *Lucian* into an Ass.

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Nor must we doubt the Truth of these Things, which the *holy* Inquisition has in several Countries at several Trials of *Witches* found to be true, as well from the Testimony of Witnesses, as also from the self Confession of Delinquents.

Now because the Inquisitors of heretical Pravity, for so they are stiled, have been pleased to send these Things into the World, it may not be amiss, nor beside our present Purpose, to enquire into the Inquisitors themselves. The first Time that I can learn any Account of them in History, is in the Days of *Maximus*, who contended with *Theodosius* for the Empire: Tho' I confess an *Inquisition* was then only intended, not brought to effect. This *Maximus* was the first who put Heretics to Death, namely *Priscilian* and his Partners, by the Persuasion of one *Ithacius*, and if it had not been for St. *Martin*, he would have sent Tribunes into *Spain*, with Power to enquire or search for Heretics, and to take away their Lives and Goods. In Process of Time, *Charlemain*, who was crowned Emperor in the eight hundredth Year after Christ, did by his Laws or Capitulars, declare the Bishop of *Rome* to be the Head of the Church. These Laws were therefore called Capitular, because they were little Heads or Chapters extracted out of the antient Fathers and Councils: Nevertheless all those Capitulars, which concerned the *Roman* Supremacy, were extracted out of counterfeit Authors, That cheat being put upon him by the Bishops of *Mentz*. About three hundred Years afterwards, in the Year 1122, the Emperor *Henry V.* was forced to resign his Power of Electing and investing Bishops, with the Staff and Ring into the Hands of the Church; of which the *Roman* Bishop, being their publicly
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acknowledged and declared Head, did by this Means obtain a greater Empire and Power, than ever the *Roman Cæsars* had. This being perceived by the *German* Emperors, there was almost perpetually War and Contention between them and the Bishops of *Rome*; but especially *Frederick II.* who flourished in the beginning of the 13th Century, spent most of his Reign, and his utmost Endeavours, to take down the Church from over-topping the Empire: Nevertheless, it was in his Reign, that the *Roman* Bishops did notably provide, for the Security of their exorbitant Power. Then it was, that *Frederick II.*, when he was at *Padua*, made those unhappy Laws, whereby Heretics, as they were called, were liable to the Punishment of Death; of which Laws the Popes made very great Advantages. Then it was, that *Gregory IX.*, advanced the Authority of Canon, or Pontifical Law, by composing the Decretals, with the Help of his Chaplain *Raymund*. Lastly, Then it was, that the Order of *Dominican* and *Franciscan* Fryars were founded, to whom was committed the Inquisition after Heretics.

Now these Monks at their first setting up for *Inquisitors*, as Father *Paul* has observed, in his History of the *Inquisition*, had no Tribunal or Court of their own, but did only preach, and stir up Princes and People, engaging them into *Crusadoes* against Heretics, by sewing a Piece of red Cloth, in the Form of a Cross, upon their Garments: But *Innocent* the IVth, who began his Pontificate about the latter End of *Frederick* the Second's Reign, observing the notable Zeal of these Fryars, thought good to erect a Tribunal for them, that so they themselves might proceed to the Trial of Heretics. To bring this about, he

had a fair Opportunity upon the Death of *Frederick*, by Reason of the Vacancy that then happened in the Empire for many Years. For now having no Emperor to control him in *Italy*, he took the Confidence to impose the *Inquisition* upon three several Provinces, *viz.* *Lombardia*, *Romanica* and *Marchia Tercisina*. There are extant several Bulls written by *Innocent IV*, to the Magistrates of those Countries: One where he sets down the forementioned Laws of *Frederick* against Heretics Word for Word, and commands them to be strictly observed: Nor can I blame him, for holding his Ecclesiastical Empire, upon no other Title than the Pretence of Religion. To be a Heretic must needs be the same Thing to him, and his Successors, as to be a Traitor is to Temporal Princes. There is another Bull of his, wherein he enjoins the Magistrates of the aforesaid Countries to observe several Articles or Constitutions relating to the *Inquisition*; in which Articles, among other Things, he ordains, that the Inquisitors shall have their Charges defrayed out of the Goods of the Persons condemned; and this Way of satisfying the Inquisitors, he ordains in another peculiar Bull for that Purpose. Hence it came to pass, that when the *Inquisition* had got footing in many Kingdoms and Countries, an incredible Number of People were frequently tormented and burnt for the Crime of WITCHCRAFT; which they had so twisted with Heresy, or the Denial of pontifical Authority, that in seeking out *Witches*, in tormenting and putting them to Death, they did at once gratify, as well the Ambition and usurped Power of their Lord the Pope, and their own insatiable Covetousness, and Thirst after other Mens Goods. In the Year 1518, the *Inquisitors*
put

put to Death a great many Inchanters, whom they had found out, as they pretended, in the *Venetian Territories*: Where such was the Extortion and Covetousness in their Proceedings, that the Country rose up against them, and the Council afterwards at *Venice*, was fain to send for these Inquisitors to enquire into their Proceedings; yet do what they could, the enraged People were hardly to be appeased. In the same Year, I suppose it was, that upon the like Occasion of the Countries rising against an Inquisitor, and carrying him to the Bishop, *Alciat*, a famous civil Lawyer, gave his ingenious Answer to the Bishop, who asked his Advice therein, as may be seen in *Alciat's Parerga*, where he handsomely describes the vain and monstrous Credulity of some Divines, in this Question of WITCHCRAFT. *Nicholaus Remigius*, a *Lorrain* Judge, confesses, that in the Time of his Judicature, in the space of sixteen Years, there were about eight hundred *Witches* put to Death, besides as many more that escaped, either by timely running away, or by a constant enduring the Torture. In a Word, after the founding the *Dominican* and *Franciscan* Fryars, and the setting up an Office of *Inquisition*, the World grew so full of Devils and *Witches*, that I am prone to assent to the Judgment of *Cardan*, who, handling this Business of *Witches* and *Witch-finders*, observed it to be full of Covetousness and Folly, as any one may read in his Book, *de Varietate Rerum*.

C H A P. IV.

Arguments to prove, that there is no such Thing as a WITCH in the Scripture; and Arguments to prove, that there is no such Thing as a WITCH at all.

BY this Time methinks it plainly appears, out of the preceeding Discourse, that the Notion of a *Witch*, as it is taken now a Days, has no Foundation at all in Scripture; but had its Original, or first Rise, out of the heathenish Fables, and was afterwards improved by papal Impositions. Nevertheless to give farther Satisfaction, I shall produce some Arguments to prove, *first*, That a *Witch* is not to be found in Scripture: *Secondly*, That there is no such Thing as a *Witch* at all.

THE first Argument shall be taken from the Difference between our vulgarly reputed *Witches*, and those which our Translators of the Bible call so; for whom I pray do our Translators call *Witches*, but the Kings and Queens and Princes of the Earth, as also the Priests and Philosophers, and wise Men of this World? Whereas the *Witches* now a Days are poor, silly, contemptible People; for instead of King *Manassès*, and Queen *Jesabel*, we now hear talk of this old Gammar, and that old Goody. It seems, the Kingdom of Darknes is quite altered in its Politics, and the Devil is not so wise as some Men make him, if this Opinion of WITCHCRAFT be true.

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THE second Argument shall be taken from the *Sadduces*, a famous Sect among the *Jews*, who denied Spirits, and the Resurrection of the Dead; yet had the five Books of *Moses* in Esteem and Regard: Wherefore either they did not understand *Hebrew*, or if they did, the Notion of *Witchcraft* does not appear in *Moses*: And if this be once granted, I suppose the other Parts of the Bible will easily follow: But perhaps it may be objected, that the *Sadduces* were a Sect after the Captivity, which kept the *Jews* so long in *Babylon*, that they forgot their own Tongue; and that the *Jews* after their Return into *Judea*, spoke not the *Hebrew*, but the vulgar *Syrian*. To this I answer, That when the Sect of *Sadduces* took its beginning is uncertain, and that however, the common People did forget the old *Hebrew*, yet the Priests did always preserve its Knowledge. Now that Priests themselves were *Sadduces* is manifest, for even the High Priest *Joseph Hyrcanus*, was one of that Sect, as *Josephus* testifies.

THE third and last Argument shall be taken from the different Practices ascribed to our vulgarly supposed *Witches*, and unto those in our Translation of the Bible: For our modern *Witches* practise a secret occult Art, and it is a great Art to discover them by several strange Signs and horrid Tortures: But those whom our Translators call *Witches* in the Bible, where such as practised what they did openly, and in the Face of the World, making public Professions of their Art, which was, as I have already made appear, the counterfeit Art of Prophecyng and working Miracles. But alas! had it been this misterious Art of contracting with the Devil, and of using his Power, the Professors whereof are so clandestine
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in their Ways, that they can hardly be discovered by various Scrutinies and Inquiries; how impossible a Thing had it been, for *Saul* to turn them all out of *Israel*, as we read he did, 1 *Sam.* xxviii. This I am sure of, a Proclamation now a Days set out to that Purpose, would avail nothing, and only serve to move the Laughter of those who stood by to hear it.

If then there be no such Thing as a *Witch* in Scripture, I shall make use of that as the first Argument, to prove, that there is no such Thing as a *Witch* at all. Nor let any one that abounds with Words, and his own Sense, immediately cry out; then there is no such River as *Thames*, there is no such Country as *America*, if silence in Scripture serves for an Argument. A Man may make such Instances from Morning to Night, and make a great Noise to no Purpose; and if there were no Difference between those Things which lie quite besides the Scope of the Scriptures Notice, and those Things which if they be true, the Scriptures could not be silent of, without the Charge of Imperfection. Let any one but read the Law of *Moses*, and then seriously consider, why it should be so severe against incestuous and bestial Concubinage, and not so much as mention Diabolical. The *Jews* were forbid to meddle with strange Women of other Nations, and should there be no Caution given against their meddling with strange Creatures, as it were of another World? Mark how curious the Law is in Matters of Uncleaness, and shall an ordinary running Issue be so much talk'd of, and no Mention made of Teats running with Blood and suck'd by Devils? *Lastly*, That Law which by its Years of Jubilee, and several other Constitutions, provided more against Oppression and Cruelty than
any

any other Law in the World ; that Law which so detested the Murther of Men, that it made them merciful to their Neighbours Beasts ; (I say that Law) could never pass over in Silence the cruel and abominable Actions of *Witches* against both Man and Beast. Without question it would have inflicted upon them the severest Punishments ; and for the Discovery of their secret and devilish Contracts, it would have laid down sufficient Marks for Trial ; especially since in a far less Matter of Adultery, it made Use of that horrible and amazing Trial by the bitter Water which caused the Curse.

Secondly, I argue from the miserable Poverty of our vulgar reputed *Witches*, that they are wrongfully accused : For I am not willing to believe, that they have such a Power with the Devil, as to make him do wonderful Things at their command, when they never command him to fetch them Money, and to fetch them Bread ; indeed in the Night-time he carries them I know not whither, and there they meet with great Variety of imaginary Mirth and Feasting. Now such as their Feast is, so is their WITCHCRAFT, not real but imaginary, as only existing in the foolish Fancies of Men.

IN the third Place, I charge those who obstinately maintain that there are *Witches* either with Irrationality or Impiety ; for it is irrational to think that the Devils are Creatures full of Malice, and breathing nothing but Mischief against the whole Race of Man, and that they suffer a Man to live, when they can so easily kill us at the Command of a *Witch* : But if you evade this by saying, that Devils cannot hurt us without God's Permission ; then, I say, it is impious to concern the great God with

WITCHCRAFT. It is true, indeed, he may send Death and Diseases amongst the Sons of Men, to punish them for their Sins at his own Pleasure ; but that he should do so at the Desire of the Devil, upon the Command of a *Witch*, is such a Gratification of Malice, as is far from God to perform. *Calvin*, in his Sermons on the two first Chapters of *Job*, takes a great deal of Pains to explode this Opinion of God's Permission, and shews by several Examples of *Absolam*, *Ahab* and *Nebuchadnezzar*, that God does not barely permit, but orders and determines the Actions of Devils and wicked Men ; affirming, that if Asses could speak, they would speak wiser than those Men who talk of God's permitting : Nor will he grant, that God afflicted *Job* upon *Satan's* Request, but because he himself had so determined to try *Job's* Patience.

Lastly, The Vanity and Falsity of their Opinion, who believe there are *Witches*, appears from nothing more than from this, that it ascribes unto the Devil an omnipotent Power ; insomuch that no rational Man, by the Light of Reason, shall be able to tell from the History of the Gospel, whether Christ was a *Witch* or no ; for let some Men think what they please, the Holiness of his Doctrine is not so much a Proof of his acting by Divine Power as the Miracles he wrought. But alas ! what were his Miracles, or how were they to valued, if malicious Creatures, without a Divine Commission enabling them thereto, can make Frogs and Serpents, raise the Dead, give Law to the Winds and Seas ; to mention no more of those prodigious Works ascribed to Devils, upon the Account of WITCHCRAFT ? For my Part, I believe that Devils are aerial Creatures ; and though they may have more Skill, Agility,

Agility, and Strength than Men, yet that they act as Men do, by applying of natural Agents and Patients to one another in this sublunary World: But as for the World Ætherial and Cœlestial, I suppose they have no Power there; consequently, that in Spight of them the Wind bloweth where it listeth, and that the Seasons of the Year, as also the Fruits of the Earth, are neither promoted nor hindered by them, but immediately depend upon the Motions and mutual Aspects of the glorious Cœlestial Stars that are no Way obnoxious to Diabolical Powers: They who think otherwise, let them consider how near they approach to the Opinion of the *Persians*, who held there were two great Beings; both Almighty, both at mutual and perpetual War; one, the Author of all Good, the other, of all Evil: The good Principle they called *Oromasdes*, and the evil one *Arimanius*. Of the same Opinion were the *Egyptians*, as appears by *Osiris* and *Typhon*; from them *Pythagoras* conveyed it to *Greece*. In a Word, the whole Heathen World seems to have been infected with this Conceit, believing infernal as well as supernatural Gods; and therefore they had Sacrifices, as well to appease the Anger, and to avert the Mischiefs of the one, as to propitiate and procure the Blessings of the other. Nor can those Christians be excused from the same Infection, who upon the Account of WITCHCRAFT, attribute Omnipotency to the Devil; for what less do they believe concerning the Prince of the Devils, and of his Power? If, according to them, he can command the Influence of the Sun, and govern the Motion of the Stars; if he can open the Bowels of the Earth, and cause the Vapours to ascend in Clouds into the Middle Re-

gion of the Air, and thence again descend upon the Earth in Thunder and Lightning, and violent Storms; if he can transform Men and Women into Cats, and if he can create Frogs and Serpents?

WHEREFORE I conclude, it was a very reasonable Decree made by the Council of *Ancyra*, more antient than the *Nicene* Council; wherein they declared, to all Christians, the Heathenishness of this Belief and Opinion: Their Words are these:

“ Illud etiam non est omittendum, quod quorundam sceleratæ mulieres retro post satanam conversæ, dæmonum illusionibus & phantasmatis seductæ, credunt & profitentur, se nocturnis horis, cum Dianâ Paganorum Deâ, vel cum Herodiade, & innumerâ multitudine mulierum, equitare super quasdam bestias, & multa terrarum spatia intempestæ noctis spatium pertransire, ejusq; jussionibus velut Domina obedire, & certis noctibus ad ejus servitium evocari: Sed utinam hæ solæ in sua perfidia periissent, & non multos secum in infidelitatis interitum pertraxissent: Nam innumera multitudo hac falsa Opinione decepta, hæc vera esse credit, & credendo à rectâ fide deviat, & in errore Paganorum revolvitur, cum aliquid divinitatis aut numminis extra unum Deum arbitratur. Quapropter sacerdotes per Ecclesias sibi commissas, populo omni instantiâ prædicare debent, ut noverint hæc omnimodis esse falsa, & non a Divino sed a maligno spiritu talia phantasmata, mentibus fidelium irrogari. Siquidem ipse Sathanus qui transfigurat se in Angelum lucis, cum mentem cujusq; mulierculæ caperit, & hanc sibi per infidelitatem subjugaverit, illico transformatur se in diversarum personarum species

“ cles atq; similitudines, & mentem quam capti-
 “ vam tenet in somnis deludens, modo lata, mo-
 “ do tristia, modo cognitas, modo incognitas per-
 “ sonas ostendens, per devia quaq; deducit. Et
 “ cum solus spiritus hoc patitur, Infidelis mens
 “ hoc non in animo, sed in corpore opinatur eve-
 “ nire. Quis enim non in somnis & nocturnis
 “ visionibus extra se educitur, & multa videt
 “ dormiendo, quæ nunquam viderat vigilando.
 “ Quis vero tam stultus & hebes est, qui hæc om-
 “ nia quæ in solo spiritu sunt, etiam in corpore
 “ accidere arbitretur; cum Ezechiel Propheta
 “ visionis Domini in spiritu, non in corpore, vi-
 “ dit? Et Johannes Apostolus Apocalypsis, Sa-
 “ cramentum in spiritu, non in corpore, vidit,
 “ & audivit, sicut ipsi dicit, statim inquit fui in
 “ spiritu. Et Paulus non audet dicere se rap-
 “ tum in corpore. Omnibus itaq; publicè an-
 “ nunciandum est, quod qui talia & his similia
 “ credit, fidem perdit; & qui fidem rectam in
 “ Domino non habet, hic non est ejus, sed illius
 “ in quem credit, id est, Diaboli. Nam de Do-
 “ mino nostro scriptum est, Omnia per ipsum
 “ facta sunt. Quisquis ergo credit posse fieri
 “ aliquam creaturam, aut in melius, aut in dete-
 “ rius immutari, aut transformari in aliam spe-
 “ ciem vel similitudinem, nisi ab ipso Creatore
 “ qui omnia fecit, & per quem omnia facta sunt,
 “ procul dubio infidelis est, & Pagano deterior”.

It is true, indeed, the Pontifical Authors make a
 great Stir in their Answers to this Decree of the
Ancyran Council; sometimes endeavouring to
 evade its Force with their absurd Interpreta-
 tions, sometimes to throw Dirt into the Face of
 the Council, as if it was not to be regarded:
 But *Alciat*, in his *Parerga* ingeniously confesses,
 that in these Answers, *Nec Cælum, nec Terram*
attingunt,

atingunt, they had neither Head nor Tail. And, which is more to be wondered at, *Martin Delrio*, the Jesuit is in this Point so ingenuous as to dissent from *Baronius*, who judges that this Council was held at *Rome* under *Damascus*, in the Days of *St. Hierom* : *Delrio*, for sundry Reasons, believing it to have been really held at *Ancyra*, the *Metropolis* of *Galatia*, according to the common Assertion of those who collected the antient Canons.

Now this Decree of the *Ancyran* Council was the more seasonable, in regard that a little before, *Manes* or *Manichæus*, had spread abroad the Christian World, that old Heathenish Doctrine of the two Principles, one of Good, and the other of Evil ; and it is remarkable, that *Witches* and *Manichæans* are coupled together, by the Emperors *Dioclesian* and *Maximian*, in their Rescript to *Julian* the Proconsul of *Africa*, *de Maleficis & Manichæis*, as it is cited out of the *Gregorian* Code by *Ruffinus* in his Collation of the Jewish with the *Roman* Laws. About 100 Years after, and somewhat more, *Priscilian* and his Followers did, in a great Measure, embrace the Doctrine of *Manes* ; inso-much, that in the Year 563, there was a Council held at *Bracara*, a Town of *Gallicia* in *Spain*, against the *Priscilianists*. In the Decrees of this Council, *Manes* and *Priscilian* are frequently joined together, for their foolish Conceits concerning the Power of the Devil or evil Principle, but especially they have one Decree very considerable to our present Purpose, wherein they anathematize all those who believe that the Devil can make any Creature, or so much as raise Storms and Tempests, by his own Authority or Power. The Words are these : *Si quis credit,*
quod

quod aliquantas in mundo creaturas Diabolus fecerit, & tonitrua, & fulgura, & tempestates, & siccites, ipse Diabolus sua autoritate faciat, sicut Priscilianus dixit, Anathema sit: Wherefore if the Devil cannot raise Thunder and Lightning and Tempests by his own Power, he did no more in the Case of Job, than Eliab, or any mortal Man may do, when he receives a Commission from God. Hence I infer, that the Doctrine of WITCHCRAFT, magnifying the Diabolical Power beyond its due Proportion, favours too rankly of Priscilian and Manes, and the Heathen World.

C H A P. V.

An Answer to their Arguments, who endeavour to prove there are WITCHES.

AND now it is worth while to consider, what these Men can say for themselves, who so obstinately maintain there are *Witches*: For they being on the affirmative Part, are bound by the Laws of Disputation, to prove what they affirm; and it is sufficient for their Adversaries to confute their Proofs: But alas! these Men are generally Ignorant of the History of Ages that are gone and past, and of the Scriptures also, as to what concerns the Question in hand: Wherefore they are wont to wave Arguments, and to cry out, this is a Question not to be disputed on, in regard it is a Matter of Fact, and consequently the Object of Sense, not of Reason. Thus when they are got to their Castle of Defence, they make a great Noise, and cry out upon the
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the unreasonableness of those Men, who will not believe what so many worshipful Persons in the World have heard and seen. And what is that I pray? Why they have heard Trumpets sound, and Drums beat, when neither Trumpeter nor Drummer have been near the Place. They have seen Chairs and Stools move up and down a Room, when No-body touch'd them, and many other Things as strange. Thus will they tell Stories of this Nature from Morning to Night if you please, though when they have done, they say nothing to the Purpose. For suppose, that all these Stories were unquestionably true, yet they would not suffice to prove WITCHCRAFT: I confess indeed, they would evince the Being of Spirits, which some Men will not deny, tho' they cannot believe it, for it is one Thing to doubt, and another to deny: But how do the Affirmers of WITCHCRAFT go about to prove, that any Man or Woman is interested in the devilish Pranks above-mentioned? Why truly by telling such Stories as these; namely, that Persons tormented by Devils have falling into Fits, at the Sight, or upon the Touch of suspected *Witches*: As also, that Persons thus tormented, have seen the suspected *Witches* in this or that Place of the Room, where No-body else could see any Thing at all; that the Standers-by have struck with Swords and Knives at the Places where the *Witches* were said to be, and the bewitched Persons have cried out; that the *Witches* were wounded in such and such Parts of their Bodies, tho' their Bodies were then many Miles distant; and that some immediately, going to their Habitations to see, have found it true.

Now here it is to be observed, that these Kind of Stories are very different from those
which

which I said before did evince to some People the Being of Spirits, and are founded partly in the juggling Delusions of confederated Impostors, partly again in the Errors or ridiculous Mistakes of vulgar Rumours: Just as it was once confidently reported, that the City of *London* was attempted to be a second Time burnt with a Fire-Ball, when a poor Link-Boy by knocking his Link, had left Part of its Flames blazing at a Door. Nevertheless, that I may not be too strict with my Adversaries, and to do them a Courtesy merely for the Disputation sake, I care not if I grant, that some of these Stories are true, namely, that there have been Persons vexed by Devils at the Sight, or upon the Touch of suspected *Witches*, and quiet when they were parted; for tho' I should grant this, I see no Reason yet to grant, that there are *Witches*, but rather to conclude, that these Spirits, who are so frolicsome in doing us Mischief, when they perceive Persons suspected to have set them at Work, may on Purpose so manage their malicious Tricks, as to confirm the Suspicion, promote the Accusation, procure the Condemnation of these miserable Wretches, and then may count this the Cream of their malicious Jest, or the Height of their Frolick, to see poor innocent People hang'd. Now this Answer of mine, altho' it be needless, and *ex abundanti*, is far more easie and unconstrained, than any Thing that the contrary Opinion shall answer to those Objections, which may be made against that absurd and ridiculous Conceit of wounding the Bodies of *Witches* at many Miles Distance.

AGAIN, they are wont to say for the Proof of WITCHCRAFT, that immediately upon the, Threatning or Cursing, used by this or that Per-

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son, such an Accident has happened to the Person so threatened or cursed. Those Men would do well to consider, that this World has stood many thousand Years, and is of vast Extent, containing many Countries and Nations full of Men, and with divers Interests and Passions; wherefore it is not to be wondered at, if there has happened in it a notable Concurrence of Events. It is certain, that poor old People when they are abused by the insulting Petulancy of others, being unable to right themselves either at Law, or at Combat, for Want of Money or Strength of Body, do oftentimes vent the Passion of their discontented Souls in Threats and Curses. It is also certain, that many Men troubled with Diseases of the Head, or Diseases of the Heart, do seem to be in perfect Health, and yet fall down dead on a sudden. Now if these two Accidents should meet together, I should see nothing but what is natural, nor should I cry out upon the Devil and WITCHCRAFT.

BUT methinks I hear some Men object, and say with a great deal of Vehemence and Confidence; what need there be any Dispute about these Stories, since Persons themselves have confessed their own WITCHCRAFT? And can there be any Thing plainer than Self-Confession.

To this I answer, that the wisest Men in the World, may by Imprisonment and Torture be brought to confess any Thing, whether true or false; as many miserable Creatures confessing themselves *Witches*, have had their Confessions extorted from them, by such cursed Means: Besides, I do not doubt, but some poor, silly, melancholic old Wretches have really believed themselves *Witches*, and to be Guilty of those Actions, which not only their foolish Neighbours,
but

but Men of Credit and Worship in the World have charged them with. Nor is it to be wondered at by any one who considers the strange Effects of Melancholy, especially if it has been heightened by Poverty or Want of good Diet, by Ignorance, Solitariness, and old Age: For that such Kind of People take their very Dreams to be real Visions and Truths, I am sure, not only by Consequences drawn from their Actions reported in Books; but by the Experience also of my own Acquaintance. The Truth is Want of Knowledge in the Art of Physic, makes Men attribute to Spirits mere natural Distempers: Nay, Physicians themselves, who have commendably laboured in Anatomy and Chymistry, perhaps have added little or nothing to the Diagnostick Part of Diseases so happily began by *Hippocrates*: Hence it is, that we are still in the Dark, as to the abstruser Distempers of human Bodies, especially such as arise from Melancholy; which are of so many Sorts, and have such wonderful Effects, that whosoever should rightly describe them, and make them plainly manifest, he would discover to us an unknown World full of unheard of and prodigious Monsters.

THUS I have sufficiently answered the most material Objections, not thinking it worth while to insist upon every Trifle, such as this is. Why, some Men will say, Do you not believe That which so many thousand wise Men in the World have believed? Surely they could not all be deceived: By such a Question as this a Man proclaims his own Folly; for are not the various Religions that have been in the World, more than enough to convince one, how absurd and ridiculous the wisest of Men are in Matters of Opinion or Belief.

C H A P. VI.

*How the Opinion of WITCHES came at first
into the World.*

BY this Time methinks I cannot chuse but wonder at the spreading of this foolish Opinion amongst Men, and its taking Root in their Minds : But then again, I cease to wonder when I consider with myself, that some Men are Knaves, others Fools, and that all Men have Fear implanted in them by Nature, fear the very strongest of all Passions ; for altho' it is an impious Saying and Irrational, that Fear was the first Thing which brought Gods into the World, yet I am apt to believe, it first of all brought in these omnipotent Devils, that contract with *Witches* : For melancholic Persons being exceeding timorous by Nature, and of exceeding strong Imaginations, upon seeing or hearing of any frightful Thing, they are very prone to troublesome Dreams, and apt to create strange Apparitions in their own Brains ; which Dreams and Apparitions, no Man in the World shall persuade them to the contrary, but that they are real Truths, especially if their Melancholy be excessive, and border upon Madness : Add hereto, that other Men not addicted to Melancholy, may upon sundry Occasions meet with Apparitions ; namely, sometimes when they are Sick of Fevers, sometimes when their Minds have been possessed, and their Imaginations wrought upon by frightful Stories ; and sometimes again, when their Eyes being weak, they walk in a thick Air towards Evening
by

by the Water Side. Not to mention those Disturbances which may arise in Mens Fancies from an inordinate Diet, either Quantity or Quality, and from sundry other Irregularities, it being easy for a Man to be troubled with the Night-Mare before he shall be able to get sound asleep, if he goes into a cold Bed, when his Body is stiff with Cold.

Now that these and many other like Occasions did oftentimes present Apparitions to Men, was well enough known to those who governed the antient World, especially the Eastern Parts thereof, for they were wise Politicians; famous in their Generations, and very well experienced in the Nature of Man: Wherefore knowing how furious and head-strong a Beast the Multitude is, not to be dealt with, unless you come, as it were on their blind Side, that is, unless you take them by the weakest Part, and lay hold on their Passion of Fear; I say, knowing this, they promoted these Fears of the People, and improved them for the Designs of Government. Hence it came to pass, that whatsoever was extraordinary in Nature, and apt to astonish, they ascribed to these Apparitions or Spirits: Namely, in the starry Heavens, the Eclipses of the Sun and Moon, Thunder and Lightning in the Clouds, pestilential Seasons, and Seasons of Famine here below, and also the most hideous Diseases, whether they were strange kind of Tumors in the Body, or Convulsion Fits, or several Sorts of Madness, and the like: For the remedying of which disastrous Accidents, and the raking away of their malignant Effects, many Charms or Spells were ordained, many exorcising or conjuring Prayers were invented; in a Word, many religious Rites and Ceremonies of
Worship

Worship were instituted, with a World of Variety and Fancy. The *Egyptians*, that antient and wise People, the very Fathers of Learning, had a Respect to these Kinds of Spirits in their public Worship, as may be gathered from *Plutarch* in his Treatise concerning the Decay of *Oracles*, where he brings in this Consideration of their religious Rites, as a probable Argument that they were the first Opiners of Dæmons; I mean, the first that brought in the Opinion of the Existence of Devils.

IN Process of Time these Actions of the Priests, and grand Politicians of the World, began to be imitated by private Persons, not only Men, but Women also, such as she who dwelt at *Endor*; what will not some attempt to do, when a necessitous Poverty torments them with a greedy Desire of Gain? These kind of shirking People, a Generation of impudent Liars, Mountebanks in Divinity and Physic, have all along pestered the Ages in which they lived. *Hippocrates* treating *περὶ τῆς ἐκείνης νόσου*, or the Falling Sickness, has excellently well described the knavish Impostures of some in his Time, who to cloak their Ignorance of that Disease, pretended it came immediately from the Hand of God, and therefore was to be cured with certain Expiations and Charms. These Men, he says, had nothing but God in their Mouths, and yet, notwithstanding this Holiness, they basely deluded the People with Magick Cheats; so also did the Heathen Divines, I mean their pretended Philosophers, Men full of Words and Beards, who for the Love of Gain, and a Croud of Disciples, would frequently make shew of I know not what sublime Kind of Knowledge and intimate Acquaintance with the Deity, by Virtue whereof
they

they would undertake to charm and exercise the evil Spirits. *Lucian*, in his Dialogue, entitled *Prologues*, Lovers of Lies, makes very good Sport with these Kind of Knaves.

Now when Hunger and Covetousness had engaged private Persons in such Kind of Actions as the Priests were engaged in, out of Policy, they could not endure to see their Office invaded, and therefore did declare to the World, that all such as invaded sacred Things, contrary to the due Rites and Ceremonies of Religion, were so far from any Communion with the Gods, that they were rather abandoned by them, and exposed to the Society of evil Spirits; by which Conversation they became full of Malice, and all Sorts of Vice and Mischief, like the Devils, with whom they conversed; for that this was the Assertion of the antient *Chaldean* Priests, is evident in that Treatise of *Jamblichus*, which treats of the Misteries of the *Egyptians*, *Chaldeans* and *A Syrians*. And thus, I suppose, I have given a true Account of the Rise and Origin of WITCHCRAFT.

BUT howsoever this Opinion of *Witches* might probably take its first Rise in the Eastern Parts, it quickly also came into the West, and there at length it very much prevailed, by Reason of the *Platonic* Philosophers: For these Men being addicted to fabling and allegorizing, became so vain as to turn, by an over-weening Credulity, their Fables and Metaphors into Reality. I confess this Doctrine of theirs, that Knowledge and Virtue are the two Things which purify the Soul of Man, and bring it into a Godlike Perfection, is Praise-worthy: Asal so on the contrary, that Vice and Ignorance corrupt Men with a Diabolical and Bestial Pravity: Nevertheless 'tis

'tis not to be endured, that such Similitudes as these should be the Ground of asserting some Mens Visions and frequent Conferences with the Gods, other Mens Associations and Confederacy with Devils: For my Part, I can see no Difference between the Actions of the Philosophical Heathen Priests, and the Magician or *Witch*, but only this, that the one had Law or Authority on his Side, the other had not. This is so manifest, that *Valentinian* and *Valery* though Christian Emperors were fain to gratify the greater Part of their Subjects, being Heathens, by making a Law wherein they did vindicate the Religion of their Ancestors, that is, the Heathen, from the foul Aspersions of *Witchcraft*. This Law may be found in the *Theodosian Code*, though it is left out in that of *Justinian*.

IN a Word, whosoever shall read the *Platonic* Writings, he shall find them full of confident Discourse about that which they did not understand, concerning the Gods, Demons, and Spirits of Men: Much do they talk of a Familiar Spirit which every Man hath, calling it sometimes the *δ οικεῖον*, sometimes *δ συνον*, sometimes the *δ εἰληχρὸς ημᾶς Δαίμων*. Nor is it to be wondered at, if Christian Authors have too much exceeded on such Subjects; in regard 'tis well enough known how much the Primitive Christians admired the *Platonic* Sect. Nor is it unlikely, that in their frequent Exorcisings and Conjurations, they did but imitate the *Platonics*, who themselves did therein but tread the Steps of the antient *Egyptian* Priests: Amongst whom it was usual to conjure the Devils with strange kind of Threats, namely, that if they would not do as the Priests would have them,

them, they would threaten to tear the Heavens asunder, and to reveal the Secret of *Iſs*, with other Threats of the like Nature ; as may be ſeen in the aforeſaid Treatiſe of *Jamblicus*.

CHAP. VII.

The CONCLUSION.

THUS I have in the firſt Place ſhewn that there is no ſuch Thing as a *Witch* in Scripture. *Secondly*, That it took its Beginning from Heathen Fables. *Thirdly*, That it was afterwards improved by Papal Impoſtures. In the fourth Place, I have produced ſeveral Arguments againſt the Affirmers of WITCHCRAFT. *Fifthly*, I have answered their Arguments to the contrary. *Sixthly* and *laſtly*, I have endeavoured to ſhew by what Means this Opinion of *Witches* came into the World ; all which I have handled ſuccinctly, pointing as it were at the Heads of Things, and leaving it to ſome abler Pen, to handle the Queſtion more at large : A Thing which is very uſeful to be done ; for if the Doctrine of WITCHCRAFT ſhould be carried up to a Height, and the Inquiſition after it ſhould be entrusted in the Hands of ambitious, covetous and malicious Men, it would prove of far more fatal Conſequence to the Lives and Safety of Mankind, than that antient Heatheniſh Cuſtom of ſacrificing Men to Idol Gods ; inſomuch, that was it not for the preſent Interpoſition of the Legiſlative Power, we ſhould have ſtood in need of another *Hercules*

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Liberator,

Liberator, to have travelled from Country to Country, and by his all-commanding Authority, free it from the base and evil Custom of torturing People to confess themselves *Witches*, and then burning them after such extorted Confessions. Happy for many poor Wretches in *Great Britain*, that they may now live without the Apprehensions of those Tortures, which, in Countries of less Freedom and more Ignorance, are still exercised in the most stupid and cruel Manner: As a Proof of which I shall beg Leave to transcribe a Paragraph from an * ingenious Paper I have already mentioned, the Authors of which say it was taken from the *Daily Courant* of *September* the 6th, 1728.

“ LETTERS from *Segedin* in *Hungary* of the
 “ 26th of *July*, import, that several Persons of
 “ both Sexes, convicted of *Witchcraft*, have
 “ been condemned to be burnt there: but be-
 “ fore they were executed, they put them upon
 “ the two following Trials, according to the
 “ Custom of the Country; the first was to tie
 “ their Hands and Feet and throw them into
 “ the Water, who, as Sorcerers used to do,
 “ swam above Water like a Piece of Wood;
 “ after which they were put into Scales, when
 “ it appeared that a large Woman weighed but
 “ an Ounce; and her Husband, who was some-
 “ what less, but five Drams, and the others
 “ were still lighter, whereupon they were burnt
 “ alive the 23d of the said Month, upon three
 “ large Heaps of Wood, having Posts set up in
 “ the Middle, to which those miserable Wretches
 “ were tied. There was among them a Mid-

* *The Weekly Oracle or Universal Library*, N^o 62.

“ wife

“ wife who had baptized two thousand Children
 “ in the Name of the Devil; and a Man of
 “ eighty-two Years, who was formerly a Judge
 “ of that Town.

CERTAINLY the Blood of Men ought not to be so cheap, nor so easily to be shed, by such who under the Name of God, gratify exorbitant Passions and selfish Ends; for without Question, under this side Heaven, there is nothing so sacred as the Life of Man, for the Preservation whereof all Policies or Forms of Government, all Laws and Magistrates, are most especially ordained; and herein is the Goodness and Wisdom of our present Legislators shewn.

F I N I S.

